

The Great Fire of London



[Webpage with video](#)

1. As the pupils enter

Play the video of the song: ["Here in Pudding Lane"](#)

2. Introduction

Depending on when this assembly takes place, there may have been some recent fires in the news which it is possible to talk about. It is unusual to have large urban fires in the UK, though unfortunately wildfires in the countryside are still common. Even more frequently are fires in parts of the world where the climate is hotter and drier, like America or Australia.

If that is not the case, then go straight into the assembly with:

- We are going to look at one of the most famous events in the history of the capital city of England, London. From watching the entrance song video ("Here in Pudding Lane"), what ideas do we have about what might have happened?
- The event is known as The Great Fire of London which took place a long time ago in 1666.
- The entrance song video provides some clues that tell us why there might have been more fires at that time – can you think of any reasons? *(The video shows that buildings were made of wood which burned easily, and the buildings were built close together, which helped fires to spread. Open flames were common, as people used candles for light, and burned wood and coal for fires and ovens.)*

3. Play the video

Duration: 4' 01" Final words: 'What do you think happened next?'

You may wish to stop at relevant points during the video to pose questions and check understanding, or wait until the end.

4. After the video - Time to talk

Lead a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:

The video gives lots of causes, or reasons, why the fire spread so quickly. Can you remember any of them?

(The six mentioned in the video are: 1. All the houses in London were so close together, which helped the fire to spread. 2. The houses were made of wood, so the fire burned one house and quickly spread to the next. 3. They also used very basic tools - people had to pump really hard to spray the water out - and they didn't work very well. 4. If only the Lord Mayor had let them use fire hooks to pull buildings down! With nothing to stop it, the fire continued to move through the city. 5. It was a windy day, which blew the fire along. 6. It had been a very hot summer in London, so the wooden houses were dry and burned easily.)

Why was the Lord Mayor not concerned about the fire?

(Fires were common in London at the time and he thought that it would be put out easily.)

The video ends with the Lord Mayor of London refusing to allow fire-hooks to be used. What do you think happened next?

(Over the next 2 days, the fire doubled in size, and destroyed half the city of London – [this video](#) tells the next part of the story.)

5. Opportunity to sing

If your assembly includes a song this is an opportunity to sing it. One option provided in the resources is the well-known nursery rhyme: [London's Burning](#).

6. Closing the assembly

The song mentions two ways that at that time they tried to put out fires:

Fetch the buckets! Fetch the fire-hooks!

What are these? How would they help to put out the fire? If the children need further prompts, ask; Can you remember from the video what fire-hooks did? Why were they not used at first to stop the fire?

As an additional prompt, there is a very good contemporary picture (included in the [resources](#) on the web page) which highlights ways in which fires were tackled at the time.

Fires are not as destructive today. Why is that? What do the children know about fire engines and firefighters today?

7. Have a final moment for quiet reflection

For example, Londoners had to be brave as they escaped the danger of the fire. When we face difficulties, we often have to be brave. Being brave doesn't mean not being scared; it means doing the right thing even when things feel difficult. Being brave can help us to deal with some of our problems.